

WELLNESS NEWS

Welcome to Wellness Across America...

We began our effort in 2003, to link school districts and community wellness initiatives to parents and their children. As you already know, The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization act of 2004 mandated that all participating Schools create a local wellness policy by September 2006. While the mandate placed a spot light on the need for wellness policies, it is clear that more work needs to be done.

The long-term effects are well-documented – heart disease, diabetes, orthopedic problems, high blood-pressure, high cholesterol, even cancer. But the short-term effects are as profound. Children who are overweight or obese often develop sleep disorders, asthma, metabolic syndrome, and low self-esteem as well as common ailments such as the flu. These factors lead to poor performance in class and eventually to poor class attendance.

Statistics point to a continuing problem, despite the efforts being made by schools and health care professionals. A large portion of the burden has been placed on schools, and while this effort is essential in diminishing the problem, children spend less than 20% of their waking hours throughout the entire year in school.

However, the school plays an important role as the conduit to the family. It has a unique opportunity to create awareness and educate parents through their students.

At Wellness Across America we understand that addressing this topic can often raise sensitivities among parents who believe they are doing the right things for their children. They need to feel that they are not being criticized but are part of the process in improving the over-all well-being of their kids.

Wellness Across America is constantly striving to connect to resources to enhance the experience for all communities who sign on to our program.

All stakeholders can make a difference. No one should feel that it is his or her responsibility alone, but everyone must play a part.

It is our mission to coordinate the efforts of local and national wellness entities and bring to you the most up to date information to help you in your quest for healthy, happy children and families.

Janine C. DiNatale,
Founder, Wellness Across America™

Schools are the conduit to the family... the real change begins at home.

In order for a school based Wellness Policy to produce sustainable behavior modifications for its students, a family-centered component is necessary...

While a robust educational effort is a necessary building block, parent education and participation is what ultimately can develop and shape new behaviors and guide children to make healthier choices.

The Wellness Across America Elementary School Program is an interdisciplinary learning program that links schools, homes and other relevant community constituents. The goal is to provide children and their families with the information necessary to make life-long healthy choices and prevent or minimize the obesity problems facing our nation.

Table of Contents

What makes Wellness Across America different?	page2
Gaps in parent engagement	page 2
Parents say "it works"	page3
Parents and their children's weight	page3
Childhood obesity Impacts academic performance.....	page 3
"Jump Start Program"	page 4



What makes Wellness Across America Different...

Guidance for living healthier lifestyles is clearly abundant, but the problem still persists. The founders of Wellness Across America with over 25 years of marketing and design experience have, with the expertise of professionals in health and education, developed a comprehensive turn-key program that markets wellness in a way that empowers children and engages the family. The difference is in how the information gets delivered. Our post surveys show that families who receive our program get the message.

- 1) Community assessment
- 2) Customized educational materials
- 3) Interdisciplinary curriculum integration reaches families and children at home and in the classroom
- 4) Interactive support for families
- 5) Connections to local resources
- 6) Outcome measurement

Customized newsletters speak directly to children and their families

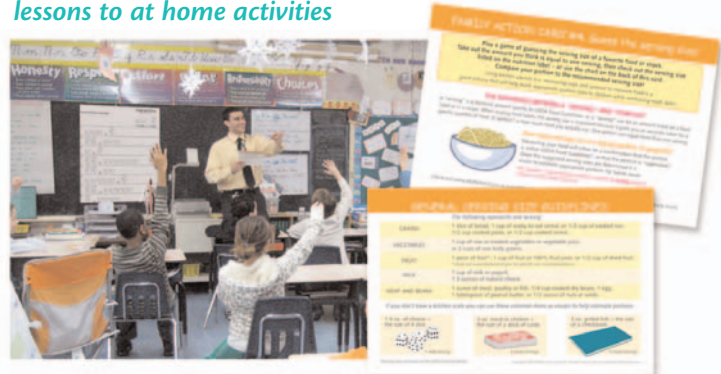
Cover reserved for school administration message



Coordinated message linking in school lessons to at home activities



Family Action Cards™ and Newsletters are created in both English and Spanish



Research, Studies, and Facts...

Reports on the Childhood Obesity epidemic are easily found in professional medical journals and publications that promote wellness for children. The following excerpt is from "An Action for Healthy Kids Report Fall 2008, Progress or Promises?"

GAPS IN PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Although there is growing concern among many parents and adult caregivers about the effects of poor nutrition, inactivity, and obesity, this concern has not consistently translated into meaningful engagement with schools. Research indicates that schools are not getting much support from parents when it comes to encouraging children to be physically active every day or to consume healthful foods and beverages. Potentially contributing to this situation is the fact that neither parents, nor school health professionals, nor community health providers feel that schools are providing adequate information to parents on the importance of daily physical activity or sound nutrition — even if they recognize that schools alone should not bear this responsibility. Research further indicates that although they care deeply about their children's health and well-being, parents often feel ill-equipped to support schools' wellness efforts. Evidence further suggests that parents, including those in underserved communities, are interested in serving as wellness advocates, but they often don't know enough about the wellness climate and processes within their schools to take specific actions. We need more creative solutions for engaging parents in improving school wellness policies and practices — and for reinforcing healthy eating and physical activity habits at home.

The Wellness Across America Post Survey says... “it works!”

Small behavior modifications toward healthier lifestyles during elementary school years, has a great impact on the future health of a child.

Wellness Across America helps families take action.

30% of the respondents to the post survey said that they made changes to their children's snacks and meals with the information they learned from the Program.

Let your Bay Shore's elementary school families request educational materials from Wellness Across America.

Please fill out the survey below or online at www.WellnessAcrossAmerica.com – and find links to resources that were used to develop the materials as well as an area to ask nutrition related questions. You will need to login in with the username: bayshore and password: wellness. If you choose to fill out the survey below please return it to your child's classroom teacher.

Grade: _____

School Name: _____

1. Did you receive two Wellness News newsletters and 4 Family Action Cards? ☐ yes ☐ no

2. Did you find the information in the Wellness Across America materials to be helpful? ☐ yes ☐ no

3. Have you kept the Family Action Cards to use for reference? ☐ yes ☐ no

4. Have you made any changes to your families snacking habits? ☐ yes ☐ no

5. Have you made any changes to your meal planning with the information you received through these materials? ☐ yes ☐ no

If yes please specify _____

6. Do you believe that your child has gained knowledge about nutrition and exercise? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Have you added any family physical activities to your schedule? ☐ yes ☐ no

(i.e. family walks, bike rides etc.) ☐ yes ☐ no

8. Would you like to continue to receive these Newsletters and Action cards? ☐ yes ☐ no

9. If your pediatrician alerted you to the fact that your child was at risk or overweight, would you be interested in a school-based program designed to assist you and your child? ☐ yes ☐ no

90% of the respondents to the post survey thought that the information was helpful and wanted to continue to receive the program.

Here are examples of changes that were made with the information provided by the Wellness Across America program:

- Reduced sugar consumption from packaged foods
- Changed breakfast cereals
- Paid more attention to portion sizes
- Started to read food labels
- Switched to whole grain pastas
- Made recipe modifications
- Introduced more fruits and vegetables

These changes will substantially reduce the incidence of obesity in children and will put the entire family on the path to a healthy lifestyle.

Research, Studies, and Facts... *Parent perceptions of children's weight*

More than 1200 families were surveyed to find out if parents had concerns about their children's weight and if they took any preventive action to avoid obesity in their children.

89% of parents of overweight 5-6 year-olds and 63% of parents of overweight 10-12 year-olds were unaware their child was overweight. It also revealed that 71% of parents of overweight 5-6 year-olds and 43% of parents with overweight 10-12 year-olds did not think their child's weight was a problem.

"These are quite troubling results and suggest that current obesity prevention campaigns are not hitting the mark with parents," said head of the Center, Professor David Crawford. *"Parents are part of the front line in the battle to reverse the trend of obesity in children, it is therefore essential that they are armed with information and practical strategies that they understand and can easily build into their daily lives."*

Deakin's Center for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research, 2007

Childhood Obesity Impacts Academic Performance.

Overweight students achieved lower grades, lower reading scores, and lower physical fitness scores, than their non-overweight peers. Overweight students also demonstrated significantly more detentions, worsened school attendance and more tardiness to school due to chronic health conditions and social discrimination.

Information based on several research studies, for more information please see www.WellnessAcrossAmerica.com

Wellness Across America, "Jump Start for Kids!"

Wellness Across America's "Jump Start for Kids" helps support and educate children and families about the nutritional, social and physical aspects of achieving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

"Jump Start for Kids" is designed as an evening program for both parent and child. The 10 week program has been developed with Pediatric Medical Advisor, Dr T. McDonagh, chief of pediatrics at NS/LIJ Huntington Hospital; Registered Dietician and Diabetes Educator, Maureen Simone and educational professionals in the fields of social work and physical education.

The pilot program was completed in Bay Shore, NY, in June 2008 with great success. Not only did 75% of the participants reduce BMI, their attitudes about food and exercise greatly improved along with an increase in self esteem.

The following are a few testimonials from both the children and their parents about what they changed with the knowledge they gained in the Jump Start Program.

I changed my habits in food, like an apple instead of chips

K.Q. age 9

My New Healthy Habits...
My Name: _____
Please tell us about the things you have changed that make you feel good!

I've changed my habits in food like an apple instead of the chips

I exercise in stroller watch tv all day

I exercise instead of watching TV all day...

K.Q. age 9

My New Healthy Habits...
My Name: _____
Please tell us about the things you have changed that make you feel better!

1 I now like healthy and exercise

2 I definitely changed my eating habits. Now I eat what's better than before.

I have been exercising more, I joined track.

E.S., age 11

My New Healthy Habits...
My Name: _____
Please tell us about the things you have changed that make you feel better!

1 I definitely changed my eating habits. Now I eat what's better than before.

2 We been exercising I joined track.

The food journal was a real eye-opener for us. It definitely made us more accountable.

Liz S., parent

Our New Healthy Habits...
Name: _____
Please tell us about the things you have changed that you feel worked for your family!

1 Something we learned so many new things for example a food journal is between me and my son. The first thing when I started to eat a journal of what we eat it was extremely helpful very practical!

2 We have been exercising more I joined track.

"I always considered myself to cook/prepare/give healthy snacks/meals for my family...I learned how much I didn't know and how much I can improve life for our family! I am sure that better habits will become second nature in no time! I notice many changes already in how I shop, think about food, notice [my son] making better choices.... many great things! I know we all appreciate it!"

Meg S., Bay Shore, NY

We contacted families a few months after the program ended, here is what they had to say:

"I am very pleased with this program, we're still looking at labels and ingredients of the foods, and think twice about buying or eating them. My daughter is conscious of what she eats, therefore I can say this program is effective. Thank you"

Guerami R., Bay Shore, NY

"I think the program is absolutely sustainable! [My daughter] continues to read labels and make much better choices about almost everything she eats. She looks to see how many grams of sugar, what the serving size is, etc. We took a "field trip" to the supermarket and did a lot of label reading there for better snack options. We are all much more aware of the fuel we put into our bodies and are incredibly grateful to everyone involved in the program. It has and will continue to have a positive effect on our family."

Elizabeth S., Bay Shore, NY



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